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PRESERVATION

Feb.-March, May-June 1984 Montana State Historic Preservation Office

In this issue of Preservation

Designating the historic properties in Bannack a state park and meticulously renovating the Northern Pacific Depot in Billings are critical if Montana's historic places are to survive. But these preservation efforts alone are not enough. We also need to look at our past and its remnants through new eyes—as our feature story puts it—to make the enjoyment, study, and preservation of Montana's historic properties complete.

For most Montanans, historic preservation means selecting one or two important buildings or neighborhoods in each town and giving them great love and attention. That narrow concentration helped save the Conrad Mansion in Kalispell, the Clark homes in Butte, Paris Gibson Square in Great Falls, the Hearst Free Library in Anaconda, the Too Close for Comfort Buffalo Jump site outside of Havre, and the Original Governor's Mansion in Helena. Without this kind of intense effort and focus, many of Montana's grandest buildings would be gone.

Many other buildings, roads, fences, and landscapes also recall Montana's distinctive and fascinating past, and yet we often do not realize or appreciate their historical interest and value. Our blindness comes not from callousness but from circumstance. We still live and work in many of our historic buildings. Many of those structures that best represent our society are not elegant and grand. We are also practical and fear that applying the label "historic" to structures or places will interfere with our use of them. But we love our history enough that most of us, once tantalized, are willing to look again and to look harder.

In fussing over and funding the two big projects described in this issue, the Preservation Office makes a long-held dream a reality. For too long,

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Through New Eyes: Appraising Montana's Historic Resources

Through New Eyes

Last October, the Preservation Office began two major projects: redrafting our State Historic Preservation Plan and writing a book on Montana's historic landscapes, buildings, and sites for highway travelers. Because both projects are labors of love and enthusiasm and require a significant investment of time and talent, we want to describe the projects for you in this issue of *Preservation* and tell you something about the person who is working on them.

When the Preservation Office staff first began to plan the traveler's history book and the new historic preservation plan, we knew that we would have to find someone with some very special talents to help us out. After a rigorous, competitive search and selection process, we contracted with Dr. Carroll Van West to research and write the material for both projects.

Van was born in Tennessee and received his Ph.D in history from the College of William and Mary. He has published articles in several journals, including the *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Montana the Magazine of Western History*, and the *Journal of the Early Republic*. He has also been a consultant to other institutions on how to present historical information. Van brings to these projects all of the necessary skills and abilities: a knowledge of Montana history, the ability to analyze historical information and site patterns, the ability to write well and rapidly, and an understanding of the principles of historic preservation.

Van has also had to be a skillful and intrepid driver. To complete both the book and the plan, Van is spending three months traveling around Montana to see and learn about the surviving historic sites, buildings, and landscapes, prehistoric remains, and ethnographic evidence and to identify those that would be appropriate to include in a roadside history of the state. We have arranged with local historical

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organizations to host meetings at which Van can describe his projects and seek information. For those of you who are still considering the invitation, we urge you to take advantage of Van's knowledge and interests. And when you see him, do not be fooled by his Tennessee drawl. Van's knowledge of and love for Montana history run deep.

The State Historic Preservation Plan

The National Park Service in the Department of the Interior periodically requires states to submit a preservation plan in order to be eligible for federal historic preservation grant funds. The new State Historic Preservation Plan will be the fourth such plan produced since Montana first established a State Historic Preservation Office in the late 1960s. Because Montana's Preservation Office was part of the Parks Division of the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks until 1977, the Parks staff submitted all three of the earlier plans, the last one appearing in 1975.

The 1975 plan included a discussion of Montana's history and prehistory, written by scholars in the field, and lists of significant historic and prehistoric sites in Montana, arranged by county and theme. The lists were generated by telephone calls and conversations; not all of the sites were visited or verified. The themes and lists included in the plan were heavily weighted toward nineteenth century activity in Montana, especially military wars, mining, exploration, trading, and trapping sites. Activities and architectural values from the twentieth century received much less attention. The plan did not claim to have a complete list of significant sites, but it was used in that fashion, especially by development companies and government agencies that sometimes ignored the other cultural resources in project areas.

Recognizing that too many state historic preservation plans were being misread or misused, the National Park Service has recommended a new format for historic preservation plans. They now recommend that we develop a *framework* in which to anticipate and evaluate historic and prehistoric sites, rather than to prepare and publish another list. We have followed the Park Service's recommendations, changing them to fit circumstances in Montana.

Van is preparing a series of outlines, one based on time, one based on geography, and one based on historic, prehistoric, and ethnographic themes. When combined, these outlines will tell us what people were doing and building from prehistory to the present. Brief annotations will accompany the outlines, explaining why Van selected certain themes, time periods, and areas. Van is testing the framework by seeing how sites fit into the outlines; and he will analyze the information he gathers to determine patterns of events and construction, the reasons for using certain architectural styles, and how and when humans changed Montana's landscape. His work will give us a "context" for understanding the history and value of a building or prehistoric site.

The courthouse in Virginia City, Madison County (above), was among those structures that received love and were preserved early, along with some of its neighbors in the Virginia City Historic Landmark District. Now we are learning to look for and understand the historical information and drama associated with such places as the Elk Bar in Chinook (far left); a lonely church in Blaine County (above right); and a timbered bridge in Blaine County (below right). We are also recognizing the significance of such sites as multi-generation homesteads, canals and dams, CCC work, fences and mailboxes, and abandoned farming towns. It is all a function of looking "through new eyes."

Before beginning the field work, Van read most of the secondary sources on Montana history and prehistory; reviewed many primary sources; examined all the archeological, architectural, and historical survey reports produced in the last ten years; and read many National Register and inventory forms. Then he began traveling and talking with local history buffs to obtain additional information to include in the outlines.

This Preservation Plan plays an important role in making sound and consistent judgments about what qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places. The new plan will differ from its predecessors in that it will show us what *kind* of sites to use in making comparisons.

A Traveler's Companion

Van's work on the new State Historic Preservation Plan serves as the groundwork for the book he is

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. . . in this issue

those of us in the office have spent too much of our time and money enforcing public regulations and managing grant monies. Instead, we want to put more energy into helping Montanans find that new perspective, to look through new eyes, to see buildings and trails and places that otherwise might escape us. *A Traveler's Companion to Montana History*, written by Carroll Van West of the Preservation Office, and the new State Historic Preservation Plan will help all of us take more notice of Montana's historic places and properties and set us to thinking about their importance to our history.

Our dream is not to force the preservation of all historic sites or even certain kinds of buildings and places. Rather, we want to give Montanans a chance to become enthusiastic detectives of those pieces of Montana's past that survive. The love and interest that will develop from these experiences will translate quickly into respect for, research into, and a commitment to preserving historical resources.

—Marcella Sherfy

writing about Montana's historic and prehistoric sites, which include pictoglyphs, homesteads, battlegrounds, schools, trails, and other places that help us to understand Montana's past. *A Montana Historical Society Guide: A Traveler's Companion to Montana History*, which will be published next winter by the Montana Historical Society Press, can be read before, during, or after traveling in the state to help travelers discover which resources can still be found on Montana's landscape.

A Traveler's Companion will capitalize on Montanans' extraordinary love of their history and their landscape. Van believes that all of us can enjoy traveling more if we are encouraged to look for the remnants of Montana's past that are evident along the state's roadways. While Van will mention special historic sites—some of them in public ownership—he will concentrate on those historical resources that characterize our history and that will help us to see Montana through new eyes.

Preservation News and Reminders

National Historic Landmark Study

Jim Charleton, a historian for the National Park Service, called in early February with the news that the Park Service has once again started a thematic study of potential National Historic Landmarks. The theme chosen for this study is "Recreation," and Charleton was looking for suggestions of sites or buildings that are important enough to an understanding of American recreational activities that they warrant national attention. We urge you to think about the sites or buildings that might fall into this category and send us your suggestions. Consider early ski resorts, hot springs, country clubs, rodeo grounds, fish hatcheries, rod and gun clubs, gentlemen's clubs, amusement parks, city parks, and so forth.

Some background on the National Historic Landmark program might help you begin your search. The National Historic Landmark program was born in 1935, more than thirty years before the National Register of Historic Places was created. The program was designed to identify properties that best illustrate major themes in American history, limiting its scope to historic sites and buildings that are important to the nation.

The landmark program was most active in the early 1960s, when Park Service historians regularly selected a theme, such as "The Mining Frontier," located sites that represented that theme well, and had the Secretary of the Interior designate them as National Landmarks. Landmark status does not confer unusual protection to sites nor does it place them in public ownership, but it does afford greater recognition and status than National Register listing alone.

Sixteen historic and prehistoric sites in Montana have been given Historic Landmark designation: Bannack Historic District, Butte Historic District, Camp Disappointment, Fort Benton, Great Falls Portage, Hagen Site, Lemhi Pass, Lolo Trail, Pictograph Cave, Pompey's Pillar, Rankin Ranch, Charles M. Russell House and Studio, Three Forks of the Missouri, Traveler's Rest, Virginia City Historic District and Burton K. Wheeler House.

We welcome your ideas for additions to the National Historic Landmark program.

National Register Packets

If you know of an older building or site that might deserve some recognition or designation, we urge you to write or call for a National Register of

Historic Places packet. The packet contains information that explains the Register, what happens when a property is listed in the Register, the procedures for listing, and ways to gather the information needed to nominate a building or site. There is also a blank nomination form, so that you can see how information about an important property is presented. The Preservation Office regularly adds to or changes the packet, and it is organized to answer the initial questions that you might have about the National Register program.

Survey and Planning Grant Funds Available

The Preservation Office is pleased to announce that the National Park Service has allocated $349,534 of Federal Historic Preservation Fund monies to Montana for use during the remainder of the federal fiscal year 1984 and for fiscal year 1985. We are now accepting applications for survey and planning grants using those funds, and we are eager to work with organizations and individuals in developing project ideas.

By congressional action, these funds *cannot* be used to rehabilitate or maintain buildings. Nor can they be used to develop plans and specifications or feasibility studies for single buildings. They can be used to complete an architectural and historical community inventory, to undertake a prehistoric site inventory, to analyze existing inventory information, to develop master plans or preservation feasibility studies for groups of buildings, and to implement some kinds of preservation education activities. Please call or write the Preservation Office for additional information.

National Register Update

One of several guest cabins at Kootenai Lodge, Cornelius Kelley and Orvis Evans's summer vacation estate on Swan Lake was built with fine craftsmanship and elegant "rustic" architectural detailing.

Over the past few months, the following properties have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places:

Deer Lodge County:
Durston Block and Annex, Anaconda, January 18, 1984
Flathead County:
Bull Head Lodge and Studio, Apgar, February 6, 1984
Lake County:
Kootenai Lodge Historic District, Swan Lake vicinity, January 17, 1984
Frank Bird Linderman House, Lakeside vicinity, February 22, 1984
Lewis and Clark County:
Gilman State Bank, Gilman, December 1, 1983
Methodist-Episcopal Church of Marysville, January 5, 1984
Missoula County:
Grand Pacific Hotel, Missoula, September 29, 1983

The Gilman Bank is the only historic building standing in Gilman, a town that grew out of the homesteading boom of the early twentieth century. After the poor farming years of the late teens and early twenties, the bank's owners were forced to close the bank and foreclose on many surrounding farms.

Community Preservation Officers

In January, the Preservation Office notified city and county governments that federal funding for historic preservation was available to hire Community Preservation Officers. The Department of the Interior refers to this as the Certified Local Government program, because it plans to eventually "certify" those city or county governments that have the professional ability to do the kind of work that a state preservation office does. To date, Butte, Red Lodge, Lewistown, Bozeman, and the Northern Cheyenne Reservation have made active commitments to the program. Butte has recently hired Janet Ore as its first Preservation Officer and Lewistown has hired Ellen Cornwall for a similar position. Cornwall is currently completing an architectural and historic survey of Lewistown's business area. We invite your city's application for funds.

Review Board Schedule

For those who are interested in nominating property to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, the Montana State Historic Preservation Review Board is scheduled to hold its quarterly meetings on May 10, August 9, and November 8. The Board will meet at 1:00 p.m. in the Society's third floor conference room.

For the Review Board to consider adding a property to the National Register at a given meeting, the Preservation Office must receive the draft nomination materials at least sixty days before that meeting date. During those sixty days, we retype and sometimes seek additional materials for the nomination and give property owners and government officials at least thirty days in which to respond so that their comments can be considered at the board meeting.

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